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ORE (pre -1950 records)

see especially pp. 1, 4-8

9 May 1957
M. P. C.

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: List of Selected Historical Records of OBI and predecessor BID/ORR, 1953-56

1. As of August 1955, when the DD/S Records Management Staff last made a comprehensive survey of the current and non-current records of CIA's office for the NIS program (BID/ORR, as it was then called; OBI, as it is now called), the records of this activity totalled some 49 different and separately organized files (or "series," as they are called by the records-management people).

2. Most of these NIS files antedate 1953, when the Historical Staff's current interest begins. (Many, in fact, go back to the beginnings of the NIS program in ORE, about 1947-50.) Of this total, some 25 series have been selected by me as those most likely to contain useful historical evidence for the 1953-56 history—useful from one or more of several points of view, e.g.: useful because of the types of basic documents it contains; useful because of the comprehensive nature of a given file; useful because of the particular way in which a given file is organized and/or indexed; or useful because it illustrates how, in practice, the NIS program was actually carried out as an extensive inter-agency enterprise.

3. The listing below is based entirely on the RM Staff's survey, that is, on its "Records Control Schedule" for OBI, dated August 1955, Secret (on file in the RM Staff), which I examined today. In other

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words, it is not based on our first-hand inspection of the files themselves. (That next step can be done, when and as necessary, after we get proper clearance with OBI and after we have selected more precisely those aspects of OBI's history that we will be actively concerned with.) Nor does the listing indicate which records may by now (almost two years later) have been destroyed, or re-filed, or transferred to some other office, or retired to the CIA Records Center. The listing nevertheless does provide, it is hoped, an immediate, preliminary bibliographical introduction to the history of OBI between 1953 and 1956. Occasional parenthetical comments have been added, below, in order to call attention informally to the special historical value of this or that file, and to suggest some of the practicable short-cuts that might be followed in using this or that file for historical-investigation purposes.

    4. Each series entry below indicates, in general:

        1. How a file is commonly known (that is, its title); this is useful especially (a) for borrowing specific files from OBI, and (b) for citing them later in our footnotes;

        2. Whether the file covers all or only a part of the period 1953-56;

        3. How bulky (or small) the file is;

        4. What kinds of typical documents it contains, and what general subjects or intelligence procedures it deals with;

        5. How the file is organized, and whether it is indexed (that is, what short-cuts can be profitably pursued in our research);

        6. Whether the file is in danger of being destroyed as a "temporary" or "non-record" file, before we have had a chance to use it.

5. As a caution to whoever will be using this listing as a
bibliographical introduction to OBI's history, there are certain
other major parallel groups of records (outside OBI) which bear
significantly on the history of the NIS program during the period
1953-56. These other non-OBI record groups are separately listed,
selectively, in five other Historical Staff memoranda, as follows:

    1. List of Selected Historical Records of <u>ORR (central records</u>),
    1953-56 (memo of April 25, 1957, Secret);

    2. List of Selected Historical Records of <u>DD/I</u>, 1953-56
    (memo of 11 April 1957, Secret);

    3. List of Selected Historical Records of <u>O/DCI</u>, 1953-56
    (memo of 12 April 1957, Secret);

    4. List of Selected Historical Records of the <u>Geographic</u>
    <u>Research Area, ORR</u>, 1953-56 (memo of 2 May 1957, Secret),
    especially with respect to those files relating to NIS
    base maps, NIS Gazetteer matters, and the NIS chapter
    on topographic, geographic, and mapping matters.

    5. List of Selected Historical Records in the <u>Coordination</u>
    <u>Area, ORR</u>, 1953-56 (memo of 29 April 1957, Secret).

Because of the "echeloning" of CIA's administrative organization and
(in turn) the layered echeloning of its record-keeping, these other
higher and parallel echelons of records (outlined above) may, in
some cases, contain highly significant historical evidence that is
not necessarily to be found in OBI's own records, described below.
In any case, some of these other records may be better organized,
for our purposes.

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